CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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LETTER DATED 16 JUNE 1995 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF AUSTRALIA TO THE CONFERENCE ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT TRANSMITTING THE TEXT OF A STATEMENT BY THE CURRENT CHAIRMAN OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC FORUM, THE AUSTRALIAN PRIME MINISTER, THE HONOURABLE P.J. KEATING MP, ISSUED ON 15 JUNE 1995, CONCERNING THE RESUMPTION OF NUCLEAR TESTING BY FRANCE

Attached is the text of a statement by the current Chairman of the South Pacific Forum, the Australian Prime Minister, the Hon. P.J. Keating MP, issued on 15 June 1995, concerning the resumption of nuclear testing by France. The South Pacific Forum comprises the following Member States: Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Marshall Islands, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Western Samoa.

I would be grateful if you would issue this text as an official document of the Conference on Disarmament and distribute it to all member States and non-member participants in the work of the CD.

(Signed): Richard Starr
Ambassador and
Permanent Representative for Disarmament Affairs

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TEXT OF STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC FORUM, THE PRIME MINISTER OF AUSTRALIA, THE HONOURABLE P.J. KEATING MP

On behalf of South Pacific Forum Heads of Government as current Chair of the Forum, I condemn France's decision to resume nuclear testing in the South Pacific.

Individual Forum Governments have already issued statements and protests that reflect the depth of their disappointment. The immediate widespread public antagonism to France's decision right across the South Pacific reflects the resentment felt by our peoples.

Forum Heads of Government understand and share these feelings. On their behalf, I express our unequivocal opposition to France's decision.

The statements that have been issued by other nuclear powers, and by other countries in Asia and in other parts of the world are welcome. Forum leaders hope that France will hear and take note of what the world is saying.

France has exercised a choice about the nature of its engagement in the South Pacific. Forum members had welcomed the improved relations between France and countries in the region. France's decision is a major setback to this trend which was partly founded on its 1992 Moratorium on Nuclear Testing in the South Pacific.

The wider implications of France's decision are also of deep concern to Forum Heads of Government.

France's decision undermines the outcome of the recent Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review and Extension Conference (NPTREC). The decision is particularly regrettable in the light of agreement reached at that Conference, including by France, that negotiations on a comprehensive test ban treaty (CTBT) should be completed by no later than 1996 and that, pending such a treaty, nuclear weapon States would exercise the utmost restraint.

The South Pacific Forum remains strongly committed to a CTBT as a key step in global efforts to prevent nuclear proliferation and eventually eliminate nuclear weapons. It offers the prospect of ending testing completely - in the South Pacific as elsewhere. The Heads of Government have noted President Chirac's commitment that France would sign such a treaty. They will hold France to that commitment.

Heads of Government also call on France to abide by the Protocols of the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty.

I am in contact with my fellow Heads of Government about arrangements for a Forum delegation to convey to the French Government the depth of the Forum's concern. I envisage that the delegation would be led by the Australian Foreign Minister, Senator Evans.

Canberra
15 June 1995